



AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Joshua E. Paulus for the Master of Arts  
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Title: THE ELIOT-GINSBERG CONNECTION: POST-APOCALYPTIC, POST-WAR  
POETRY WITH AN ORIGINAL CREATIVE MANUSCRIPT, “THE WEAK MINDS  
OF MY GENERATION”

Abstract Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

This document explores the influence of T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* on Allen Ginsberg’s *Howl* via the use of fragmented structure and post-apocalyptic language. Both of these poets created zeitgeist poems that spoke to post-war societies. Eliot, Ginsberg, and their readers found meaning in speaking for the fractured nature of society. This is an exploration of Eliot’s influence on Ginsberg. Ginsberg followed similar traditions the modernists, such as their ability to *show* rather than to *tell*. This document includes the creative manuscript “The Weak Minds of My generation,” inspired by the styles of both T.S. Eliot and Allen Ginsberg.

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POETRY  
WITH AN ORIGINAL CREATIVE MANUSCRIPT, “THE WEAK MINDS OF MY  
GENERATION”

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Joshua Earl Paulus

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Approved by the Department Chair

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Committee Member

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Committee Member

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Committee Chair

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Approved by the Dean of the Graduate School and  
Distance Education

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## I. Introduction

T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* and Allen Ginsberg's *Howl* utilized post-apocalyptic language and the modernist style to present post-World War I and World War II cultures, creating manifestos that revealed the zeitgeist of fragmented, divided, and confused cultures broken by culture-shifting events. Ginsberg's generation-defining poem *Howl* presented prophetic, apocalyptic visions to post-World War II culture. Ginsberg, having studied Eliot during his time at Columbia, borrowed images and forms from Eliot in order to create a post-apocalyptic (post-World War II) language-driven embodiment of Ginsberg's broken generation. The post-apocalyptic language used and the dystopian worlds described by these two authors serve as the skeleton to generational manifestos and provided an avenue for social protest about an unsettling reality. This document explores Eliot's definition of this type of post-apocalyptic poetry. It also presents the purposes of this form, according to T.S. Eliot, and describes the influence Eliot had on Ginsberg's momentous poem *Howl* while examining the type of post-apocalyptic language in Eliot's *The Waste Land* and Ginsberg's *Howl*. Both Eliot and Ginsberg produced poetry that defined their respective generations during an era that was discovering meaning after the tragedies of war. Eliot's *The Waste Land* spoke to the youth of the post-World War I generation while Ginsberg's *Howl* filled the same role within post-World War II culture. Ginsberg, and many of the Beat Generation's poets, rejected the structured form of the modernist writers. Theado writes about the Beats and their relationship with the modernist poets, "Although they were generally appreciative of Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot, the Beats loathed the ivory-tower entrapment of poetry" (749). Ginsberg's *Howl* utilizes very similar language and evokes a very similar response

from its readers as the “ivory-tower” poets, such as Eliot, did. In many cases, *The Waste Land* and *Howl* are grouped together as generation-defining poems because both poems spoke truth to post-war eras of dystopian society:

Literary historians often refer to *Howl* as the most important poem since *The Waste Land*, arguing that it helped free American poetry from New Critical hegemony by proclaiming loudly and abruptly that free verse, the personal, and the political belonged again in the poetic vernacular. (Lee 367)

The political and philosophical bond with poetry resonates in Eliot’s ideologies regarding poetry. Eliot refers to this connection as “unified sensibility.” Eliot used this in his poetry as a way to understand and comment on post war culture. Patea writes and quotes Eliot, “The poetics of a ‘unified sensibility’ consists in a ‘direct sensuous apprehension of thought, or a recreation of thought into feeling’” (Patea 18). Eliot believed that poetry should establish a connection with philosophy and emotion.

The term “post-apocalyptic” has several different connotations depending on the context. Monroe K Spears “identifies ‘the concern of the modern artists’ as ‘characteristically apocalyptic and eschatological’” (qtd in Sarwar 1). *The Oxford English Dictionary* defines “post-apocalyptic” as “(b) following an event regarded as an apocalypse, esp. following a nuclear war or other catastrophic event.” Having both written their manifesto, generation-defining poems after World War I and World War II, Eliot and Ginsberg represent a time that is post-apocalyptic, and both poets utilize language that is representative of a catastrophic post-war era. Eliot’s poem, *The Waste Land*, is titled appropriately as a description of a world wasted by war, specifically London. Ginsberg’s *Howl* is descript of a generation “who wandered around and around



at midnight in the railroad yard wondering where to go” after such apocalyptic events occurred (22). Both Eliot and Ginsberg wrote their poems in order to show their generations what war had done to their relative generations.

## II. Eliot’s Modernism and *The Waste Land*

Eliot’s poetry and criticism influenced the definition of “modernism” in the twentieth century: well written poetry was a product of what he called “unified sensibility.” Gitlin works under the assumption of modernism that “The artist is modern, in short, precisely by being forward-looking: by bringing to the audience some news of which it was not already aware, which it may well resist, and often in some form it will find uncomfortable” (63). Eliot attempted to enlighten his audience to that state of the world beyond the war and beyond present day. Beyond that, Eliot’s purpose was to show his audience a devastating subject, such as a war-ridden culture, with specific, descriptive language in order to evoke emotions. As Patea argues, “The modernist idiom is predicated on the convergence of intellectual speculations, feelings, sensations and emotions” (Patea 18). *The Waste Land* in particular excels at this notion of “unified sensibility,” the joining of philosophy, poetics, and emotion-driven images: “Eliot’s concept of a unified sensibility should be considered in the light of his philosophic outlook, concerned with ethical and religious values and wider socio-historical considerations. Eliot perceived the condition of contemporary culture as fragmented and divided” (Patea 17). Eliot knew that contemporary culture suffered greatly because of World War I and used his poetics to express a vision of his post-apocalyptic era; as Patea writes, “Eliot believed...poetry should express a vision” (19). *The Waste Land* expressed

an unforgettable and generation-defining vision, a vision of London. His vision shows London broken and tries to grapple for hope beyond that vision with his final words for peace: “Shantih Shantih Shantih” (Eliot).

Eliot’s *The Waste Land* became the painted picture of post-World War I Europe, speaking to the hearts and minds of the people displaced by the tragic events of violence. Even more so, it became a step toward the future in a disconcerting, and even comforting, way: “Samuel Hynes writes, ‘Eliot’s poem was a manifesto, a weapon to be used against the philistines and the Old Men (and their ladies). It seemed to belong to the young, and one might find it...on the table of every literary undergraduate’” (Gitlin 73). This progressive poem united a fragmented generation that was disoriented by the war-driven years it had just endured.

*The Waste Land* became a way for the post-World War I generation to cope and connect: “Many of the alienated in the schools, in England even more than in the United States, seized upon ‘The Waste Land’ (1922) as an emblem of their estrangement” (Gitlin 73). The images and descriptions within *The Waste Land* gave voice and fragmented reality to those who were finding meaning during a confused era: “Eliot’s ‘The Waste Land,’ as edited by Pound, was the pivotal work, both a confession of incoherence...and implicitly a frontal dare to the audience to accept the shockingly non-linear spiritual and political disorder of post-World War I Europe” (Gitlin 74). Eliot’s honest work produced and included images and references that spoke unsettling truth to his audience. In Part II of *The Waste Land* “A Game of Chess,” Eliot writes, “The chemist said it would be all right, but I’ve never been the/same” (161-162). Eliot drives this notion of change within a culture of confusion and non-linearity. His use of the first-person speaker in this line

offers a personal conversation with the audience. He does not exclude himself from this transition from “it will be all right” to “never [being] the/same.”

Eliot’s style in *The Waste Land*, as well as his language, attempts to provide a visual for the state of humanity. It is broken and fragmented, and it attempts to escape confinements of the era before; Eliot “broke radically with English-language regularity” (Gitlin 72). Aside from the images of the broken world, he writes his poem within a fragmented structure and without linear translation. Eliot does not offer descriptions in a traditional “meter” or “rhyme schemes,” but instead “he [Eliot] defied convention by cutting jaggedly, cinematically, among different scenes, different voices, and different rhythms” (Gitlin 72). In Part II, “The Fire Sermon,” Eliot combines the use of fragmented form and post-apocalyptic language:

At the violet hour, when the eyes and back  
 Turn upward from the desk, when the human engine waits  
 Like a taxi throbbing waiting. (215-217)

Eliot mixes enjambment with lengthier lines; this, again, harkens to the fractures and unstructured nature of society. As Munson states, “I am compelled to reject the poem as a sustained harmoniously functioning structural unit” (158). *The Waste Land* would not have had its effect of representing reality without sacrificing structure and form.

Eliot’s *The Waste Land* is broken into five parts: Part I “The Burial of the Dead,” Part II “A Game of Chess,” Part III “The Fire Sermon,” Part IV “Death by Water,” and Part V “What the Thunder Said.” *The Waste Land* is also well known for its excessive use of allusions and borrowed lines from earlier, classical literature. John Crowe Ransom summarizes the purposes of this by stating that “Mr. Eliot inserts beautiful quotations into

ugly contexts” (168). The general importance of Eliot’s allusions to Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, and a multitude of others is to parallel beauty and fragmented society; for example, Eliot borrows lines and subject material from *The Tempest* and proceeds with “When Lil’s husband got demobbed” which is “based on gossip recounted to the Eliots by Ellen Kellond, their maid” (9. 139, Footnote). Eliot leaves his reader in a state of confusion by presenting the scattered nature of humanity: “One pronounced, much-noticed feature of this poetry is its apparent inaccessibility: difficulty, obscurity, not meeting the eye and ear with self-evident meaning” (Gitlin 70). Aside from his many obscure references, Eliot writes in a way that forces the reader to spend time meditating over the purposes behind the pictures. He begins the first part, “The Burial of the Dead,” with questions of life surrounded by death:

April is the cruelest month, breeding  
 Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing  
 memory and desire, stirring  
 Dull roots with spring rain. (1-4)

By compounding “breeding” and “dead land,” together, Eliot presents a paradoxical connection. The “esoteric” nature of *The Waste Land* is a purposeful decision by Eliot to only present paradoxical, fragmented images to convey emotions before meaning. Eliot pairs “Lilacs” with “badlands” to place beauty and death side by side as well as “Dull” with “spring rain.” By presenting these opposing images, Eliot creates a poem that explores that paradoxical nature of finding happiness after devastating events: “These characteristics reflect the present state of civilization. The traditions and cultures have mingled, and the historical imagination makes the past contemporary; no one tradition

can digest so great a variety of materials, and the result is a breakdown of forms and the irrevocable loss of that sense of absoluteness which seems necessary to a robust culture” (Leavis 174). Eliot’s form and content represents, in definition and in usage, contemporary culture. Eliot writes, “For you only know a heap of broken images” in “The Burial of the Dead” (22). He continues to revisit “broken images” and devastation throughout each of the five sections of *The Waste Land*. In “A Game of Chess,” the second section, Eliot writes, “I think we are in rats’ alley/Where the dead men lost their bones” (115-116). The vision of *The Waste Land* extends to more than the natural world; it envisions the nature of the dead and argues, on the dead’s behalf, for their lost nature. Robert Langbun writes, “The characters in *The Waste Land*...are nameless, faceless, isolated, and have no clear idea of themselves. All they have is a sense of loss and neural itch, a restless, inchoate desire to recover what has been lost” (231). Eliot writes in *The Waste Land*, “White bodies naked on the low damp ground” (193). This grotesque image does not explicitly convey what the reader’s response should be or what response Eliot intended for his reader to have, but it leaves a negative, funeral-esc image (“And bones cast in a little low dry garret,/Rattled by the rat’s foot only, year to year”) to express the negative, wasteful nature of death, war, and apocalyptic events (194-195). Eliot’s depressing and disheartening images create those atmospheres for the world he is describing.

### III. The Eliot-Ginsberg Connection

Historically, *Howl*, by Ginsberg, had a very similar effect on literary criticism and contemporary, post-war culture as *The Waste Land*: “Literary historians often refer to

*Howl* as the most important poem since *The Waste Land*, arguing that it helped free American poetry from New Critical hegemony by proclaiming loudly and abruptly that free verse, the personal, and the political belonged again in the poetic vernacular” (Lee 367). Ginsberg’s literary tradition was surrounded by the Beat Generation and the Beat Poets, such as Jack Kerouac, Anne Waldman, and Neal Cassady. Ginsberg’s poetic career launched because of the Obscenity Trial in 1957. Lawrence Ferlinghetti, publisher of *Howl*, commented that “It would have taken years for critics to accomplish what the good collector did in a day, merely by calling the book obscene” (169). Ginsberg’s fame started due to curiosity: curiosity regarding the poem’s obscenity and the vulgar words that Ginsberg wrote.

*Howl* had a similar effect on its generation as *The Waste Land* in that it became a manifesto and painted picture of a fractured and confused post-World War culture. Raskin argues in his book *American Scream*, “little attention has been paid to the influence of T.S. Eliot on Ginsberg’s work” (xxiv). In order to understand much of the imagery and stylistic choices that Ginsberg makes, *Howl* should be considered relative to the styles and images of *The Waste Land*. Raskin, later in his book, makes the point, “As in *The Waste Land*, the cities of the world are falling down: London is burning, San Francisco is collapsing, and Moscow is dying. Those apocalyptic images came bubbling to the surface again in San Francisco, and in *Howl* they found near-perfect expression” (Raskin 132). Ginsberg studied Eliot and was well aware of his contributions to the poetic tradition and to literary criticism. Raskin notes, “Between 1946 and 1949, Ginsberg’s poetry became richer and more complex, increasingly reflecting Eliot’s influence, as many of his classmates noticed” (Raskin 69). Eliot’s poetry had a significant

and noticeable influence on Ginsberg's poetry. Raskin continues his comparison of Eliot and Ginsberg:

The first-person narrator of *Howl*- the unnamed 'I' who sees and who is also a seer- is akin to Eliot's J. Alfred Prufrock and also akin to Tiresias, the blind Greek prophet in Part III of *The Waste Land*. Like Tiresias, the narrator of *Howl* sees the secrets of the human heart and the human soul. In Part V of *The Waste Land*- 'What the Thunder Said'-Eliot offers images of the collapse of the world. In Part III, 'The Fire Sermon,' he emphasizes the surreal quality of modern urban life, describing London as a city that's unreal. Ginsberg borrowed Eliot's images. In his journal he wrote, 'I came to the window and glanced out into the night space at the unreal city below in which I inhabit a building.' (Raskin 131-132)

The phrase "Unreal City" is a reference that Eliot borrowed in *The Waste Land* from poet Charles Baudelaire's poem "The Seven Old Men" where Baudelaire writes, "Teeming city, full of dreams" (North 43). This reference is used to give an exposition to *The Waste Land* and to give a vision of unreal, hopeful expectations of a desolate place, London. *Howl* also gives a vision of an Unreal City: "In Ginsberg's peyote-induced vision of the 'Unreal City,' there wasn't a single living soul. When he came to write *Howl*, he populated his city with a cast of dead souls and underground men" (Raskin 133). He populated this city in order to give a voice to the "underground men" that were, as Ginsberg believed, forgotten. Both Eliot and Ginsberg built their poems around the "modern urban life" of their contemporary cultures.

Eliot's literary career spiked before Ginsberg's *Howl* was first published.

Ginsberg was born in 1926, four years after Eliot published *The Waste Land*. Maturing

under the influence of the modernist movement, Ginsberg learned and borrowed from Modernist poets. He successfully and honestly produced poetry that explored the state of humanity during his post-war era, much like Eliot's *The Waste Land* post-World War I. Vendler, in connecting Eliot and Ginsberg, writes, "Ginsberg's path resembles that of T.S. Eliot: both possessed exceptionally high-strung sensibilities, which when exacerbated plunged them into states alarmingly close to madness; both had breakdowns; both sought some form of wisdom that could ameliorate, guide, or correct the excess of their reactions" (100). Ginsberg, and many of the Beats, distanced themselves from the Modernists, such as Eliot. This removal is not completely present in the poetry of Ginsberg, particularly *Howl*. Perloff, in exploring *Howl*'s language, draws upon this modernist-Ginsberg connection, "Indeed, Ginsberg had so thoroughly internalized the aesthetic of the modernists he revered-Eliot, Pound, Williams, Hart Crane-that 'Howl' unwittingly makes a case for *showing* rather than *telling*, for the inseparability of *form* and *content*" (30). *Howl*'s images, "backyard green tree cemetery dawns," *show* a generation that is "starving hysterical naked" (13, 1). This notion of showing his generation drove Ginsberg's *Howl* and is what caused unfounded criticism during the Obscenity Trial. The Obscenity Trial questioned Ginsberg's choice of language in *Howl*. For example, in line 11 of *Howl*, Ginsberg writes "with dreams, with drugs, with waking nightmares, alcohol and cock and endless balls." Barry Miles quotes Mark Schorer, professor of English at the University of California who testified at the trial, "I would say the poem uses necessarily the language of vulgarity" (172). The poem was not found to be obscene, and the publisher, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, was found not guilty of publishing obscene materials.



Ginsberg had much to owe Eliot in the images and language that he utilized.

Raskin writes in the introduction to his book *American Scream*,

Ginsberg read Eliot, of course, and his approach to poetry was shaped by Eliot's ideas about tradition and the individual talent and about the form and the language of poetry. As Cynthia Ozick observed, 'Ginsberg's 'Howl,' the single poem most representative of the break with Eliot, may owe as much, thematically, to 'The Waste Land' as it does to the bardic Whitman or to the opening of the era of anything goes. Ginsberg belongs to the generation that knew Eliot as sanctified, and, despite every irruption into discipline, Eliot continues to ring in Ginsberg's ear.' (xxiv)

Ginsberg's success is not only driven by the honesty of his poetry, but also his ability to adopt the modernist idioms into a progressive, political manifesto. Raskin continues, "Like *The Waste Land*, *Howl* was born of crisis; like *The Waste Land*, it is a 'historical product, the fruit of a time and a place'" (xxv). Ginsberg follows Eliot's model of "unified sensibility" and becomes a post-World War II embodiment of one of the most important modernist writers, Eliot. Katz Eliot comments on specific images that Ginsberg and Eliot utilize: "It is interesting to note that 'Howl' adopts some of the imagery of T.S. Eliot ('Here is no water but only rock'), associating the signs of a sterile society in 'Howl,' Part II, with images of dryness and rocks ('granite cocks!' 'down on the rocks of Time!')" (200). The "sterile" nature of society is represented on a modern culture that is not life-giving, life being represented by the water in Eliot's *The Waste Land*. Ginsberg uses this imagery in a very similar manner; society is as life giving as a dry rock.

Much like Eliot, Ginsberg references a hellish place. Mark Schorer also stated at the Obscenity Trial that Ginsberg “create[s] the impression of a nightmare world in which the ‘best minds of our generation’ are wandering like damned souls in hell” (qtd Miles 172). Eliot and Ginsberg utilize “hellish” language to express the post-apocalyptic post-war generations. Raskin elaborates extensively on Eliot and Ginsberg and the connection they share in their poetry and argues for *Howl*’s place in the classical modernist definition:

*Howl* also seems to meet most of the criteria for a classic that T.S. Eliot-whose authority Ginsberg both respected and railed against-mentions in his incisive 1944 essay, ‘What Is a Classic?’ ‘The perfect classic must be one in which the whole genius of a people will be latent,’ Eliot wrote. ‘The classic must, within its formal limitations, express the maximum possible of the whole range of feeling which represents the character of the people who speak that language.’ (Raskin 224)

Eliot’s definition of poetry and what dictates a poem as a “classic” premises Ginsberg’s era and the Beat tradition with poetry that speaks to and for the people who are familiar with specific languages. Ginsberg’s language, as found to be true in the Obscenity Trial, is specifically formatted, similarly to *The Waste Land*, to represent the emotions of America post-World War II. Raskin continues his argument, “And, within its own unique formal structure, *Howl* expresses the extremes of American feeling and the extremes of American character” (Raskin 224). Raskin operates under the argument that Mark Schorer utilized in his comments regarding the “obscene” nature of *Howl*, creating a reality that is nightmarish and hellish. Raskin concludes, “In *Howl*, Ginsberg moves from futility to ecstasy, paranoia to inner peace, and from a sense of terror to a sense of

holiness. He captures the feelings of doom and despair that many Americans experienced in the wake of World War II” (Raskin 224). While many place Ginsberg’s anti-war sentiments within the context of the Cold War, Ginsberg’s *Howl* spoke to a generation and a nation processing identity after World War II.

Ginsberg’s poetry represents the modernist approach to poetry in that he maneuvers through different arenas of images and settings leaving trust in the words for the readers to expose and draw meaning. As argued in Shinder’s book, “Ginsberg’s great hyperbolic-comic-fantastic-documentary poem thus memorializes that brief postwar moment when the creation of poems was still informed by the Modernist trust in the power of words to make a difference” (qtd. Shinder xxiv). Eliot trusted, as did Ginsberg, the presentation of a specific world would not only give accurate representation, but it would evoke a call to action. The footnote to *Howl*, the fourth and final section of *Howl*, evokes a change in emotion. The repetition of “Holy!” within this section adds emphasis and creates an attitude of acceptance, an acceptance of everyone and everything: “Everything is holy! everybody’s holy! everywhere is holy! everyday is in eternity! Everyman’s an angel!” (115). All the minds of his generation are holy, and so are the minds of generations past and generations to come.

Ginsberg describes America, in *Howl*, in a similar light as Eliot does for London in *The Waste Land*: “it’s a land of the open road and the dead end of civilization” (Raskin 224). They both recognized the state of post-war humanity. Ginsberg’s *Howl* presents America as a place with many Asylums and with lost intellects: “who threw potato salad at CCNY lecturers on Dadaism and subsequently presented themselves on the granite steps of the madhouse with shaven heads and harlequin speech of suicide, demanding

instantaneous lobotomy” (Ginsberg 66). Eliot, in a similar way, presents culture after World War I as misshapen and confused:

Unreal City,  
 Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,  
 A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,  
 I had not thought death had undone so many. (60-63)

Eliot accomplishes the same atmosphere as Ginsberg by describing the people in these post-war eras with post-apocalyptic, death-driven language: “brown fog” and “winter dawn.” These two images represent the lack of life, winter not spring, brown not green. Raskin remarks in regard to *Howl*, “There are echoes of...the world weariness of T.S. Eliot” (224). There is a distinct influence that occurred between Eliot and Ginsberg that manifests itself in the ways that they present post-war cultures. From the perspective of language, many note, as Raskin has, that Ginsberg follows Eliot’s model for classical literature: “when we read a classic, Eliot observed, we do not say that ‘this is a man of genius using the language,’ but ‘this realizes the genius of language.’ In *Howl*, Ginsberg realized a great deal of the genius of American language” (225). Ginsberg, having studied Eliot, borrowed this use of language and understanding of the context in which he wrote. During the writing of *Howl*, Ginsberg was under the influence of the “high modernists” more so than the Beats and Walt Whitman: “From the late 1940s to the mid-1950s...Ginsberg was closer to T.S. Eliot and W.H. Auden than he was to William Carlos Williams and Walt Whitman;” Ginsberg is commonly placed in parallel with Whitman And Williams as his major influences. Having written and published *Howl* in the 1950s, Ginsberg’s poetic maturity had not completely broken away from the high-

modernist traditions (Raskin 6). He was exposed, during the composition of *Howl*, to the modernists which he borrowed and learned from. Ginsberg was heavily influenced by the poetic traditions of Eliot's *The Waste Land* and philosophies of poetry during the production of *Howl*.

#### IV. Ginsberg's *Howl*

Ginsberg's *Howl* represented a post-World War II culture "who wandered around and around at midnight in the railroad yard wondering where to go, and went, leaving no broken hearts" (Ginsberg 22. 3). Ginsberg's generation, much like Eliot's, was fragmented and left in an apocalyptic state. *Howl* was an honest vision of its contemporary culture; this American Society that it depicts is very similar to the characters found in Eliot's *The Waste Land*. Raskin suggests, "one might say that the whole poem was inspired by the apocalyptic first line, with its storehouse of powerful images and ideas – of the poet's generation, along with destructiveness, madness, nakedness, hysteria, and hunger" (167). Ginsberg composed a poem inspired by the broken, contemporary culture he witnessed throughout the early years of his life. Lee suggests that "Explicitly, the minds that America has driven to madness are those of the male, mostly homosexual, drug-using members of Ginsberg's own Beat-bohemian coterie." (381). While this is true, *Howl* extends Ginsberg's vision of a nightmare-America to more than just the male population of his generation. He reaches into the past to give an account of his Mother, Naomi Ginsberg, when he writes, "with mother finally \*\*\*\*\*" (71). In 1947 "Naomi Ginsberg [had] a lobotomy," which he included in his poem eight years later (Shinder 274). Ginsberg's audience extends further than those

who have similar beliefs and lifestyle choices as he; it extends to anyone displaced by social, war-fractured expectations.

Howl is broken into three sections, and then is concluded by a “Footnote” section.

Jason Shinder condenses the sections and summarizes them:

The poet's call first descends into a nightmare world in which the "best minds" are destroyed. He then indicts those elements ("Moloch the loveless ... Moloch the heavy judger of men.") that destroy the best qualities of human nature, and afterwards offers the possibility of imperfect fulfillment in the search of friendship and love ("I am with you Carl Solomon."). The call of the poet ends with the declaration that in spite of (and because of) what is lost everything is/must be holy. ("Holy the super-natural extra brilliant intelligent kindness of the soul!"). ( 3)

Ginsberg wrote *Howl* in a similar ambiguous vein as Eliot by leaving the subjects of his poem, the repetitive “who,” unspecified. Lee continues his discussion of *Howl*, “this blurring of the poet’s central objects of identification implies that his lamentation for the madness of his own generation is also a lamentation for the blighted hopes and wasted intellects of their precursors” (Lee 384). Much like the Modernists before him, Ginsberg *shows* his reader character after character without *telling*, thus leaving the reader with an emotion rather than a definition. This is a continuation of Eliot’s influence in that “the relative pronoun ‘who’ becomes interrogative, and the form of Ginsberg’s poem subtly undermines the notion that generations break away cleanly, defining themselves through their clear difference from the past;” *Howl* acknowledges the impossibility to define a generation without accepting the past (Lee 383). Not only is *Howl* reminiscent of

contemporary, fractured culture, it is accessible to various areas (upper, lower, and middle classes). The poem speaks for the lower class that has been pushed aside by the establishment of Moloch.

Part II of *Howl* establishes an atmosphere surrounding Moloch that is negative and grotesque. By using the reference of Moloch, “the Canaanite fire god who was worshiped by sacrifice of children,” Ginsberg paints a negative picture of America (Eliot, Katz 192). Ginsberg forces his readers to connect the impossible situations and displaced nature of America with an unrelenting, industrialized deity that accepts child sacrifices. Ginsberg writes, “Moloch the crossbone soulless jailhouse and Congress of sorrows” (82). Part II of *Howl* makes very specific statements against America that follow the first section which projects destroyed “great minds.” America, and the wars America was involved in, is the cause of rejected generations. Lee similarly comments that “*Howl* speaks for a generation doomed, exhausted, institutionalized... a vision both haunted by the past and predictive of political futures” (382). *Howl* was a warning for the future, an accusation for the past, and a realistic picture of the present, the present that was torn by a war-driven past. Raskin writes in the preface of his book that “it bound us together and gave us a sense of identity as members of a new generation that had come of age in the wake of World War II and the atomic bomb, a generation that lived in the shadow of nuclear apocalypse” (xi). *Howl* gave identity to those who did not have identity. Much like *The Waste Land*, it provided an avenue for the estranged and forgotten to find meaning in a confused, fragmented world. This zeitgeist poem spoke to the post-World War II era: “In the act of writing *Howl*, he discovered the very language he needed – a language of the everyday and of Judgment Day – a language of the mundane and the

apocalyptic” (Raskin xxi). Ginsberg used apocalyptic and mundane language because those were the languages needed to describe his generation and to speak to his generation.

Ginsberg’s *Howl* is an attempt to awaken his generation to the atrocities of their era and to explore the potential path of America following the apocalyptic events of World-War II:

To the extent that Ginsberg’s great poems of the 1950s, *Howl* above all, are prophecies of emergent movements and collectivities, they are also elegies for cherished pasts at risk of receding irretrievably, of being inconspicuously transformed and finally erased by narratives of progress that manage-by dint of historical victories-to limit the possibilities of the future. (Lee 368)

Ginsberg is grasping for hope, as seen in “Footnote to *Howl*,” that his generation will rise above Moloch and above the establishments that oppress his generation with “Prophetic momentum from line to line” (Lee 383). His momentum for change, understandability, and acceptance is the same momentum found in Eliot’s *The Waste Land*, understanding and the revealing of the estranged, fragmented society following war and loss in America and in London.

Eliot’s modernity is predicated with “unified sensibility” and written with post-apocalyptic language and imagery in order to provide the audience with an unsettling vision of the contemporary world. Ginsberg also adopted this approach in his generation-defining poem *Howl*. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* and Ginsberg’s *Howl* spoke to contemporary culture and created a manifesto within contemporary, broken, and wandering cultures. The work of these authors brought freedom to discover and analyze



the state of culture during post-apocalyptic eras, providing a zeitgeist atmosphere that allowed the people to connect with the poems. Ginsberg found much of his inspiration from the Modernists, specifically Eliot regardless of his intentions to reject the hierarchy of these writers. The poem *Howl* borrows structure and language from *The Waste Land* and offers a similar manifesto to the post-World War II era as Eliot did for the post-World War I era.

*The Waste Land* and *Howl* became the voice for estranged people and rejected portions of society, predominantly those who had been affected by war and the changes that occurred in society preceding war. Both *Howl* and *The Waste Land* employ similar styles and post-apocalyptic images; Ginsberg studied Eliot during the process of writing *Howl* and produced his poem for the Asylum-esc population of America, as Eliot's *The Waste Land* provided a glimpse into post-apocalyptic cultures devastated by apocalyptic events, World War I and World War II.

## V. “The Weak Minds of My Generation”: A Collection of Poems

In the attached collection of poetry, “Modernist Beat: The New Critic,” my goal was to approach poetry with the same honesty and “show-versus-tell” approach Eliot and Ginsberg used. This meant the combination of post-apocalyptic language and descriptions with the momentum of free verse. This particular combination allows for subject matter flexibility. A direct approach is used in the poem “Whimper” in that it expresses an honest view of current culture different than that of either Eliot or Ginsberg- while employing post-apocalyptic language and fragmented form. The first few lines invert Ginsberg’s *Howl*:

I saw the weak minds of my generation as Ginsberg saw the greats of his.

I saw them, suit and tie, slither

Around and on top of each other as snakes in a crate.

Instead of capturing the “best minds,” “Whimper” paints a picture of the weak minded people in contemporary culture. This three part poem, much like the multi-portioned poems *Howl* and *The Waste Land*, develops from death and starvation towards a positive conclusion. The repetition of the word “Create” is similar in style and usage to *Howl*’s “Holy” and *The Waste Land*’s “Shantih.” It provides the reader, and the culture, with a sense of hope; something new could come from post-war eras. In Eliot’s notes following *The Waste Land*, he writes, “Shantih, Repeated as here, a formal ending to an Upanishad. ‘The Peace which passeth understanding’ is our equivalent to this word”( 26). There is peace that is represented in the repetition of “create” in “Whimper.” This poem provides a similar zeitgeist anthem that speaks directly to a specific culture. By including a general

statement about the minds of a “generation,” the subject, as in *Howl* and *The Waste Land*, remains elusive.

The collection of poems borrows the Modernist style in “*showing* rather than *telling*.” The poem “Upon Finding a Picture of Young Joshua” utilizes images such as “a burnt picture of a father with tobacco breath” to evoke an emotion. It provides a parental disappearance while providing a description of the father figure, a tobacco user. There is a heavy use of imagery regarding the past, specifically in the use of the “picture” image. This poem utilizes the past to comment and criticize the present. This makes a statement about masculinity after the turn of the millennium and its comparison to masculinity during the late twentieth century. Much like Eliot’s and Ginsberg’s work, this poem relies heavily on broken lines of poetry; it provides a broken image of the subject discussed in the poem itself:

After my money was my money and  
 human trafficking was another country’s  
 problem.

After Vanilla Sky’s four-time law was  
 a reason to laugh.

The broken line technique adds emphasis to the words that are set apart. The word “problem” is set aside to highlight it as a key component to the rest of the poem. The subject this poem highlights is a “problem.” The anaphoric use of the words “Before” and “After” borrows the repetitive nature of the word “who” in Ginsberg’s *Howl*. Rather than assigning a situation to a vague subject, “Upon Finding a Picture of Young Joshua” assigns “Before” and “After” to an ambiguous sense of time.

The first poem in the collection, “Winter’s Tale,” also utilizes an Eliot, Modernist approach to its subject. The poem describes a cold vision of society at presents images such as “quivering rats and shivering owls” to accomplish this. This poem, similar to Eliot’s *The Waste Land*’s Unreal City, uses non-existent places. “Winter’s Tale” draws from an unreal, non-specific place where science has overcome and replaced nature.

Three of the poems in this selection, “Laramie, WY,” “Preparation,” and “Salt Lake City” share a similar setting in that they surround hitchhiking. This was a specific choice to use a cultural, neo-beat experience as a way to reflect on how strangers interact with each other. “Laramie, WY” directly speaks to this interaction when the speaker of the poem hitches a ride with a smoker. This interaction becomes less strained as both parties begin to accept one another. This is represented by the line, “With my enlightened friend who smiled.” This speaks directly to societal implications of generally unaccepted lifestyles, much as Ginsberg does when he writes, with approval, of “the best minds of [his] generation.”

Following the apocalyptic language mode, “The Call” utilizes such language to critique and comment on small towns. This poem assigns the small towns the label of “community of lovers.” The use of the word “lovers” is intended to direct the reader’s attention to the religious persona that many small towns carry with them. Likewise, the title uses religious language to further this persona. “The Call” pairs religious language, “Good Friday,” “the call,” and “Three days” with apocalyptic language, “break glass,” “tornadoes,” and “Inferno.” Eliot and Ginsberg used similar pairings in *The Waste Land* and *Howl* to parallel ideologies with hellish language.

Ginsberg's *Howl* began with an acknowledgment to Carl Solomon. In a similar way, "Corona" is dedicated to a man named Andrew. From the content of the poem, Andrew is a guitar player. The poem adopts Andrew's life as a way to present the setting of Corona, CA. His experiences, as explored in the poem, surround religious establishments and family life. "Corona," structurally, explores two different voices, one describing Andrew and the other describing Corona as a whole. The descriptions are similar to other poems in this collection in that they adopt similar post-apocalyptic languages to Eliot and Ginsberg: "sweet tune of rattled glass...yellow air." Much like "who" in Ginsberg's *Howl*, "Corona" has a similar anaphoric style with the repetition of the word "where." The poem, included in the manuscript, "Dear News Stations" repeats the phrase "The goodness."

The final poem in the collection, "My Home," carries many images found in *The Waste Land* and draws heavily from Eliot's poetic style. Eliot uses rivers, months of the year, and classical references in *The Waste Land*. "My Home" uses these images, "Able and Cain," "March," "April," and "river froze," to emphasize the same notion of a world falling apart. The first, third, and fifth stanza of this poem shows the reader where "My home" is. In each of these stanzas, "home" is in an unstable place: (first stanza) "My home sits on a rock under the meadow's river," (third stanza) "My home sits on the blades of grass hardened," and (fifth stanza) "My home sits on the branch of a fallen tree." The notion of "home" as a safe place is debunked in this poem. This debunking is accomplished by the apocalyptic language such as, "fear," "skeletons," and "sunken ships." The "Unreal City" of this poem is home.

## **VI. “The Weak Minds of My Generation”**

*Winter's Tale*

The Winter's snow fell on small  
town gravestones, leaving flowers  
brown and bones chilled. We walked  
down cracked roads to old barns  
looking for blooming angels  
through unhinged doors, behind  
the quivering rats and shivering owls.

We dreamt a time of summer before the snow covered  
autumn's lost night with the sun.

Winter spoke in whispers as the regretful  
Orpheus when back was turned too soon.  
Whispers floated with the western winds  
to the eastern suits with green in their eyes.

We dreamt of what split the sidewalks and concrete.

It told us the horrors of the green  
world from which it saved New York,  
where claws dug into muddy fields  
and men chewed on sticks in trees.  
We were shown the wonders of  
the grey, tall structures of science,  
towering above the clay pines.

*Whimper*

I saw the weak minds of my generation as Ginsberg saw the greats of his.  
 I saw them, suit and tie, slither  
 Around and on top of each other as snakes in a crate.  
 I saw the tree of knowledge and wisdom  
 Fallen next to Adam's grave, who was buried at the same depth  
 As Eve, where the stump had  
 Opinion carved into the side by a negro hippie.  
 I saw our generation immersed in  
 An either-or democratic choice where the menu  
 Serves pork or beef to the vegetarian.  
 There was a man who walked down a street in the fall  
 Whispering to himself about the last time he  
 Slept in a bed next to a woman.  
 There were people on a street, building houses made  
 Of picket signs on the sands of time.  
 I saw a man offer a Bible to another in  
 A bar. To which the man responded,  
 "Give me whiskey, then give me truth."  
 Next to them I saw a woman write another woman a list  
 Of ways to find happiness. Later she dreamt  
 Of her friend in a doctor's outfit who then  
 Tore pages of the Bible and stuffed them in capsules  
 Prescribing them twice a day and three times on Sunday.  
 She woke and jumped from her window  
 In hopes of finding a muse to give her smiles.  
 I saw a soldier shoot a man who earlier  
 Told his wife, in his own tongue, "Honey,  
 This is so you may rest at night without fear."  
 There sat a man in his office. He sat in front of a  
 Computer screen writing a column against  
 Homosexuals and abortion clinics while humming  
 "Let it Be" to himself as it played on the archaic record  
 in the office.  
 I saw the lumberjack of time cut down seven trees in the park  
 Of a University while people walked by with  
 Ear buds, listening to their favorite public speakers.

I saw the weak minds of our generation turn from  
 Struggle, shout ideas from their asses and plug their ears.  
 I heard a small voice say:  
 "No struggle is too hard until it erases the road in front of your eyes  
 And makes you sit and forget or take a new path."  
 I saw a negro go to prison on behalf of a racial confused



Singer. Loss is a foreign concept in a broken world to which  
I saw them overdose and point the finger, monkey see, monkey do.

I saw the narrow minds drive across state-lines to hear a man  
Carve opinions and graffiti their names on the  
Foreheads of those who nodded and listened.  
I saw a man throw ropes around all mammals with breasts  
And wield a hot iron brand ready to make his mark, only to  
Be confused by the resistance of his lustful tug.  
I saw people inject poison into the trusting  
Colleagues and fellows and gave half-assed cures  
To the frowns and cold coffee.

I saw our generation in a market, and we sold  
Silent wisdom  
For a hermaphrodite who gave its every  
Thought without thought as if running stop signs.  
This is my generation, we are the Noise.

## *II*

I saw old books decay, brown and ragged  
on a desk in corner office  
where the definition of “hypocrisy” was folded.

There sat a woman with pen and paper  
scribbling, scribbling letters to  
her husband from Iraq.

He drove to and from compounds  
He drove the same tracks  
He wrote the same words  
every day. Every minute hand on his watch marked.

Times Square is crowded.  
The forgotten towers are growing  
new screaming voices.  
Spiders nestle in the corners  
and mice find refuge with wondering whiskers.

*III*

Dear Brother of Long Beach where the swinger bars grow,  
 know that the sunflower follows the sun and the salmon  
     swims upstream.

The world is at your feet by the ants, and you hold a pen in your hand  
 drawing mountains and curled up men.

The people have leant you their ears with  
 steadfast hands repeating your name: "Welcome, Brother."

Welcome to the Garden where snakes  
 speak and flames grow on trees.

Welcome to the streets of Riverside and the  
 hunched, hooded gunmen waiting to see  
 does your name mean something to him.

Welcome, Brother, to the Utopia and the mystical  
 figures of the American Dream who  
 will pick at your pockets and claw at your necklace.

Welcome to the home where snow  
     burns skin.

Brother! Hold up your pen and create!  
 Create! Your educated guess on mathematics  
     and speed of light.

Create! That home of rain and spring  
 where your daughter awaits calling you  
 loving father with forgetful visions.

Create! That wife you once spoke  
 forever honesty to through cheeky grin  
 and alcoholic breath from uncle Jack.

Welcome, Brother, creator, father, and husband  
 to California's dead sister who  
 rocked you to sleep at night and gave  
 you water at the well.

Broken is the man in the cubicle next  
     to the fax machine  
     is the woman with the children  
     in Kentucky.  
     is the pen that you once wielded  
     in aesthetic power.

*Upon Finding a Picture of Young Joshua*

I used to be a man.  
 When two roads would watch me step on stones  
 and sticks approving the adventure of a walk.  
 Long before we walked through Asphodel Meadows,  
 playing thin ice and chit chat day by day,  
 dreaming of Holy riches without a hard day's work,  
 I was a man.

I was a man  
 before masculinity was an identity,  
 a little black book of popularity,  
 Before my mud-filled mouth was  
 liberation from the bonds of sainthood  
 and my skeleton key to every...single...sentence  
 Before a feminine figure was another  
 rock in the street to carry my car  
 to another counseling session.  
 Before the mini-skirt dreams and  
 low-cut valleys of unanimated curves.  
 Before the smile was pushed behind the curtain  
 and the whore was valued more than the  
 book nerd.

I became a boy  
 right after I \*\*\*\*\* and said \*\*\*\*  
 A voice named *Manipule* entered my  
 right eye and showed me how  
 to move a leg and stretch an arm  
 without the years of dinner and a movie.  
 After I tried to push mountains to the  
 ocean floor and split stone with dull  
 knives ignoring the Savior's open hand.  
 After my money was my money and  
 human trafficking was another country's  
 problem.  
 After Vanilla Sky's four-time law was  
 a reason to laugh.  
 After a one night dream in the woods  
 made a monster of a single mother and  
 a burnt picture of a father with tobacco breath.  
 I drove to Calzoni's carnival and became  
 a real boy.

That picture observed and weighed my eyes  
and gazed in wonder at the tattered  
listed boy who had forgotten to help  
his Mother with her dishes and watched  
her eat at a table for one on her Birthday,  
Christmas, and Mother's day.  
Who had left his Father in western bars  
to see if barley held the answers.

"You're a man now!"  
My Father once said to me,  
Blue eyed and bourbon breath.

I marveled at that man in a clip-on tie  
and a toddler's suit, looked up at the mirror where  
gelled hair and narrow tie snickered  
and *Manipule*, serpent slithering was whispering  
in my ear, "Eat the apple."

*The Call*

Heads break glass in our community of lovers,  
mystically driven by peyote circles and hated crimes.  
We hug and wax barrels in narrow motions  
in our community of lovers.

Waiting and waiting and waiting for someone to visit  
Sitting on porches and truck beds dreaming of tornados  
Hands held high in this loving community of sore-eyed  
small town telescopes.

Waiting for the torn shirts to come back from the wash  
Where we found curiosity of the untouchables and the  
sore-eyed hawk snatched the mouse in its talons to  
stop it from eating.

The call rang out on a good Friday. Three days we  
walked, groping in the dark, looking for the moment  
between black and white, between 'you' and 'me' where  
we all wish to be.

We burned white buildings in water from our community  
of lovers. We threw bottles and pipes in the burning waves  
and sat down on porches, looking at rocks, wondering  
why the visitors, the lost souls of the present Inferno  
never came to our community of lovers.

*Preparation*

I prepared for weeks. I cut the cardboard.  
I stretched my thumb.  
One backpack and a notebook. No weapons.  
I sipped my coffee and consoled  
my friends and Mother.  
There stood the game of life  
Wrapped in the scarves and glasses  
of the people I confide.

This new game was at my nose  
And harnessing itself to  
My ears and eyes beckoning  
That I come play street ball.  
“Abandon security lust for the  
Love of life” it said.  
I drew “WEST” on the cardboard  
With a thick marker and gave  
Her one last kiss for hope and prayer  
That I might find what I had not lost.

Game on.

*Laramie, WY*

I put my thumb down  
And he rolled his down his window  
“I’m headed to Riverton”  
Close enough  
“Hop on in...do you smoke?”  
No.  
“No dude...do you *smoke*?”  
I took a deep breath and got in his truck.  
His socks were missing, and his sunglasses were nice  
The rain trickled down in the Wind River Mountains  
His system was perfect.  
Lighter in one hand on the wheel and  
His pipe in the other. Flick. Inhale. Window down. Exhale.  
As we drove he spoke  
Of conspiracies in the education system  
And I laughed along.

One hour to go

This was the road I traveled  
As a child when visiting my  
Father for summers of hiking and  
Fishing. My sister usually was car  
Sick the whole way.  
Flick. Inhale. Window down. Exhale.  
And here I was years later swerving  
Down the road, dodging cars and mountains  
With my enlightened friend who smiled  
More and more and I forgot more and more  
Just where I was and where I was going, going, going.  
Flick. We were laughing. Inhale. We were agreeing. Window down.  
We were there. Exhale.

*Salt Lake City*

I stood at the intersections of highways in Salt Lake City looking for mercy.  
There were no on-ramps to join the madness that sped above me.  
Hollow, faded glass and brown grass scraped and clanked under my feet.  
Walking forward, ancient art scattered the pillars upholding the colorless structures  
My journey carried me on for three miles to a rundown gas station where  
time burned united men on the sidewalks with hanging heads and unforgetful minds  
There I sat on the dirt and stone waiting for the mercy of man to emerge in Utah.  
There I watched straw filled vehicles drive on listening to violins talking of mistresses.

(Three hours)

Mercy found me in the shape of an elderly man in a red truck leaving the city.  
He was headed south.  
“I’ve seen it all,” he said to the window.  
I turned and saw a temple where young adults entered with heads standing firm on their  
shoulders.



**Corona**  
*For Andrew*

Andrew could play better than the rest in his home studio.

*Where empty religions met completed faith*

But Andrew never saw the hand-shaking priest of thanks.

*Where Disney and girl-watching men saw eye to eye*

He never saw the thief of high heels exit the house.

*Where men throw rings in fires, flipping ties over shoulders*

He played his guitar a sweet tune of rattled glass  
while smoking cigarettes.

*Where yellow air meets the ocean and spread out family*

He played while open hands met ignorant children's faces

*Where smoking is a sin and spirits are a compliment of birth*

He played and played and played his amazing grace

*Where men holding bibles turn backs on smoking guitarists*

Where Andrew played blues of his lost Mother.

*Dear news stations*

I'm writing in honor of those who found hope in life and discovered it to be generous and  
 profound  
 Of those who weren't murdered or murdering and found truth and peace without a flick  
 of their trigger finger  
 I write to ask what good people have walked this earth without eyes peering at their every  
 movement as to set example  
 That television of white static hatred has ripped open the hatches of a smiling mind fuck  
 and left us quiet  
 On a couch  
 Holding a stick.

I'm not shocked anymore.

My eyes and ears have dilated to your dim light of wisdom  
 Your last broadcast was terribly offensive and left the country in a fury of red and blue  
 boxing matches  
 Oh news station, oh pastor of the United States' information, why is your interpretation  
 left in turn-or-burn stature?  
 We all know that you have forgotten the goodness that is still left in the world that you  
 lost to green and camera lenses  
 The good that left their CEO chairs to raise a family in endless laughter and touching and  
 hugging and talking and kissing and presents and mercy and forgiveness and tears  
 The good that was found innocent when snakes bit his ankle and left him bleeding with  
 no guest to pull him out of his lion's den  
 The goodness the brought home daddy from a foreign country with most of his limbs if  
 not all four, choking on memories that splintered his lungs with bullets and rage  
 The goodness that educated our children to write in cursive and to think like their peers  
 and to forget their flaws by boxing them together on shipping them to  
 employment yards  
 The goodness that graced America with its presence through two opposite souls that  
 fought to emotional death of condemnation from our country's head table.

Oh news station.

Why have you left us blind with your wide open opinions?

*Threshold*

There my feet stood on the threshold of the  
last mile where the white and maroon hosts  
awaited the shaking and shivering of  
new lands to speak through my hands and breath.

The threshold held my fingers loose and graceful  
with beckoning eyes to cross from  
the rat-dragging, spirit-dripping home  
I had lived since fragile formed  
care had departed in brown and dust lands.

The lips of new life met my soulless voice  
where I stood in front of tears and laughter  
and music and sighs.

*Her Dream*

Mice scuttled across the floor in  
her studio, no-furniture, cement floor apartment.  
She dreamt  
of grass and endless ceilings where the smoke would evolve into clouds that poured rain  
on unsuspecting seeds.  
of mountains! And monumental mountains in spring scattered country sides where the  
bones were buried gracefully.  
of celebrations at bright white buildings where the ghosts in democratic time fulfilled  
their destinies in unknown, empty rooms.  
of beaches with mother and father and children stepping on bird feces and broken shells  
while skipping and splashing.

The mice carried food to Limbo servants  
down holes and through gates.  
She walked from corner to corner to corner  
to corner scratching her head and elbows.  
Took notes on walls with scratching rocks  
to remind herself that it's not yesterday  
or tomorrow.  
Trees grew outside her window and branches  
scraped her glass.

She stared at the trees and wondered where He went.

*My Home*

My home sits on a rock under the meadow's river,  
where mother, father, and brother are but slivers  
swimming downstream to escape fear in the rain  
and the permanent meeting of Able and Cain.

The river froze that month of March with green  
leaves falling where dust and roots collide  
where bones are hidden from the crows  
where no water is found in the forest's trees.

My home sits on the blades of grass hardened  
by broken, ticking watches dropped abandoned  
from the wrists of weary travelers knocking  
on the doors of misshapen cabins tilting.

Plants turned brown in the month of April  
after the rain flew south for the summer.

The sunflowers sought mercy, heads turning  
day after day lowering their heads every night.

My home sits on the branch of a fallen tree  
above the ant colony digging for the sea  
pulling at little skeletons to keep their  
home lifted and secured with care.

Our home washed down the waterfalls  
past the snails and beyond the halls  
of the university to open blue graves  
where our valleys of sunken ships crawl.

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THE ELIOT-GINSBERG CONNECTION:  
POST-APOCALYPTIC, POST-WAR POETRY  
WITH AN ORIGINAL CREATIVE MANUSCRIPT,  
“THE WEAK MINDS OF MY GENERATION”

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